

- *They consider a variety of ways to bring about desired improvements. This consideration includes:*
 - a) *the creative exercise of proposing changes in activities;*
 - b) *the analytical exercise of defining what resources are available and what constraints exist at the time;*
 - c) *the prognostic exercise of identifying the possible results of each alternative.*

This is the most challenging of the conditions; it is also the heart of the matter. Our concern is to find the best way of attaining our goals. Good planning will increase effectiveness.

- *They select the most feasible alternative and proceed with it.*

An E.R.A.S. offers a strategy for decision making. Making decisions means making choices.

- *Their budget reflects their planning, including the changes they have made, the priorities they have established, and the resulting framework that identifies and describes their activities.*

If decisions are to be implemented, the planning and allocation of resources for activities is a crucial part of the decision-making process.

- *The above conditions exist continuously through subsequent evaluations.*

An E.R.A.S. is a cyclic set of activities whereby plans and activities are regularly reviewed and assessed with a view to increasing effectiveness.

The key to the effectiveness of a systems approach such as E.R.A.S. is the *integration* of the above activities. For example, stating intentions (writing goals and objectives) is valid only to the extent that such goals are taken into account in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs. Similarly, the framework that identifies the educational and supporting activities of the school is valid only if it is *used* for evaluation, the establishment of priorities, the development of programs and accounting and budgeting. Each activity in a systems approach should be viewed as a means, not an end.

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An Educational Resources Allocation System

An E.R.A.S. is concerned with increasing the effectiveness of school programs and the support services that bear on those instructional programs.

For purposes of illustration, a department, school, or family of schools could say that they have an E.R.A.S. in complete operation, if all of the following conditions exist.

- *They are using written statements of their philosophy and intentions to guide the development of their activities and assess the success of these activities.*

Statements of goals and objectives are useful only if they can and do guide actions. If we seek absolute perfection in our goal statements, we may have no time or energy to do anything else. On the other hand, the more clearly we can state our objectives, the easier it is to meet them.

- *They have identified and described the activities (educational and supporting) within their particular school in terms of their relationship to each other and to their philosophy and intentions.*

It is vital to develop an overview of how the whole system works, how each part of a school system relates to the others, and what the role of each part is. Each of the service areas in a school system has a role to play in education. Evaluation of their effectiveness can be made only if their roles are clearly defined in relation to the goals of the system.

- *They regularly evaluate the following:*
 - a) their philosophies and intentions to see that they are useful and that they relate to student learning requirements;*
 - b) their activities to see if they are achieving the desired learning results;*
 - c) the evaluation procedures themselves—What is being evaluated? When? How? By whom?*
 - d) the nature and extent of the use of available resources.*

The information obtained from evaluation is used for making decisions with respect to (a), (b), (c), (d) above.

Evaluation should not be viewed as an isolated activity, but rather as an aid in reaching a decision.

- *They use the activities that were identified and described as the basis for financial reporting.*

They should keep track of how and where they use resources. Financial accounting is simply a record, in monetary terms, of how resources are used—personnel time, materials, equipment, facilities.

- *When they find some improvement should be made with respect to any activity, they should try to define, in terms of their philosophy and intentions, the exact nature of the improvement and its importance relative to all other activities.*

The clearer our understanding is of the needs to be met, the better able we will be to achieve our purposes.